

CLAIMS:

1. Railway rail handling apparatus configured for track side operation comprising ground engaging wheel means and rail moving means, which is
5 configured to engage a railway rail along part of its length, the rail moving means being further configured for its progressive movement longitudinally along the rail as the railway rail handling apparatus moves on the ground engaging wheel means and, as the rail moving means so moves, for progressive bending of the rail laterally of an unbent part of the rail to thereby move the rail from a first position
10 to a second position, the railway rail handling apparatus defining a footprint over the ground, and the rail moving means being, in use, operative within the footprint.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 in which the rail moving means is configured to progressively bend the rail laterally over the ground.
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3. The apparatus of claim 1 or claim 2 in which the rail moving means is configured to support a part of rail above the ground.
4. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the railway rail handling
20 apparatus is configured for steering of the ground engaging wheel means over the ground.
5. The apparatus of claim 4 in which the railway rail handling apparatus is configured for steering of the ground engaging wheel means over the ground in a
25 direction laterally of the rail as the rail moving means moves along the rail.
6. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the railway rail handling apparatus is configured to move only one rail from a first position to a second position at a time.
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7. The apparatus of any preceding claim further comprising two spaced apart apparatus support members for supporting the apparatus over a railway, the rail moving means being located between the two apparatus support members.
- 5 8. The apparatus of claim 7 in which the railway rail handling apparatus is configured to distribute weight of a rail substantially equally between the two apparatus support members where the rail moving means supports the rail above the ground.
- 10 9. The apparatus of claim 7 or claim 8 in which the apparatus is configured such that the rail moving means depends between the apparatus support members.
10. The apparatus of claim 9 further comprising a chassis means supported on the apparatus support members with the rail moving means depending from the chassis means.
- 15 11. The apparatus of claim 10 in which the apparatus support members are of a length which, in use, elevates the chassis means above a railway by a distance sufficient allow the rail moving means to raise a rail above the ground for proper operation of the rail moving means.
- 20 12. The apparatus of claim 10 or 11 in which the chassis means comprises a platform that defines an aperture through which the rail moving means depends.
- 25 13. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the rail moving means is configured to be extendible.
14. The apparatus of claim 13 in which the rail moving means is progressively extendible.
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15. The apparatus of any preceding claim configured for movement of the rail moving means on the railway rail handling apparatus laterally of a rail engaged in the rail moving means.
- 5 16. The apparatus of claim 15 in which the railway rail handling apparatus is configured such that a part of the rail moving means that engages a rail describes a substantially linear path as it moves on the railway rail handling apparatus.
- 10 17. The apparatus of claim 15 or 16 in which the rail moving means is configured to swivel in relation to the railway rail handling apparatus.
- 15 18. The apparatus of claim 17 in which the rail moving means has an elongate body, with a first end of the elongate body mounted to swivel on the apparatus and a second opposite end of the elongate body configured to engage a rail.
19. The apparatus of any one of claims 15 to 18 in which the rail moving means comprises user operable arresting means for arresting movement of the rail moving means in relation to the apparatus in a direction lateral of a rail.
- 20 20. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the rail moving means is configured for rotational movement in relation to the railway rail handling apparatus about an axis extending from the ground, when the railway rail handling apparatus is in use, and substantially perpendicular to a longitude of a rail engaged by the rail moving means.
- 25 21. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the rail moving means defines an aperture for receiving a rail lengthwise.
- 30 22. The apparatus of claim 21 in which the rail moving means is configured to completely encircle a part of the length of rail engaged by the rail moving means.

23. The apparatus of claim 22 in which the rail moving means has a gate means moveable to allow a rail to be received by the rail moving means.
24. The apparatus of claim 23 in which the gate means has locking means for locking the gate means in a closed position.
25. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the rail moving means is configured for ease of its movement longitudinally along a rail engaged by the rail moving means by means of one or more of a roller, a bearing and a low friction surface.
26. The apparatus of any preceding claim further comprising railway rail raising means operable raise an end of a rail towards the rail moving means.
27. The apparatus of any preceding claim comprising two spaced apart apparatus support members for supporting the apparatus over a railway, the ground engaging wheel means being provided on the apparatus support means.
28. The apparatus of any preceding claim in which the ground engaging wheel means comprises a continuous chain tread means.
29. The apparatus of claim 28 in which the continuous chain tread means is of a length at least as great as a standard spacing of railway sleepers.
30. The apparatus of claim 28 or 29 comprising two continuous chain tread means, the two continuous chain tread means being spaced apart to substantially the same extent as a standard rail to rail spacing.
31. The apparatus of any preceding claim configured to be self-propelled.

32. A method of handling a railway rail by means of a railway rail handling apparatus, which is configured for track side operation and comprises ground engaging wheel means, the method comprising

engaging a railway rail along part of its length by a rail moving means of the railway rail handling apparatus, and

moving the railway rail handling apparatus on the ground engaging wheel means to progressively move the rail moving means longitudinally along the rail to progressively bend the rail laterally of an unbent part of the rail to thereby move the rail from a first position to a second position, in which the rail moving means is operated within a footprint over the ground of the railway rail handling apparatus.